



CPE REPORT

Eastern Kentucky University News for the Council on Postsecondary Education



DOCUMENTARY FILM CHRONICLES HISTORY OF ECU

A documentary film that chronicles the history of ECU premiered recently at the Center for the Arts.

"The Essential Eastern," an 86-minute film in the making since early 2014 and funded by the President's Office, is organized chronologically. Produced and directed by ECU communications professor Chad Cogdill, follows the institution's evolution from Central University in 1874 and Walters Collegiate Institute to its beginnings as a state normal school in 1906 (Eastern Kentucky State Normal School is depicted above) and then to a state college and, eventually in 1966, a university. Through two world wars and other military conflicts, the Great Depression, the Civil Rights Movement and integration, the film touches on the historical events and cultural and societal issues that helped shape the campus and the students, faculty and staff who have called it home.

"What emerged," said Cogdill, "was Eastern's resiliency during difficult times, coupled with a strong sense of community throughout the institution's history. As with many educational institutions, Eastern has endured its share of victories and setbacks. But one thing remained clear, and that is a strong sense of community and institutional pride."

Cogdill said the film was inspired and informed by Dr. Bill Ellis' 2005 book, "A History of Eastern Kentucky University." Television personality Nick Clooney served as narrator.

The film, which will also air on KET, features interviews with 18 figures from the University's past and present, including Ellis and President Emeritus Doug Whitlock.

REGENTS APPLAUD GAINS IN NUMBERS, QUALITY

The ECU Board of Regents, meeting in regular session on Oct. 19, applauded a report from the Division of Student Success that indicated record enrollment numbers, continuing improvements in graduation rates and new highs for the preparedness level of this fall's incoming freshman class.

It also heard a construction update and about plans to create a life-size statue and wall to honor Hall of Fame Football Coach Roy Kidd at the stadium that bears his name.

Dr. Laurie Carter, executive vice president and University counsel, shared that:

- ▶ ECU this fall welcomed its largest freshman class in 35 years. The 2,906 freshmen are part of the University's largest-ever enrollment of 16,959.
- ▶ Thirty-nine percent of the freshmen were awarded merit scholarships, up from 28 percent a year ago. The average ACT score (22.2) and average high school GPA (3.28) are also the highest in University history. The number of Governor's Scholars is up from 29 a year ago to 50.
- ▶ The percentage of students with developmental needs is down from 31 percent to 21 percent.
- ▶ Seventy-six percent of all students in this fall's freshman class listed ECU as their first choice on their FAFSA forms. In particular, Carter noted, more high-quality students from the University's primary service region are choosing Eastern. A recently revamped merit scholarship model and associated increase in funding are "having a direct impact in our service region."
- ▶ Four-, five- and six-year graduation rates are all up and ahead of goal.



From left in ECU's Latino Success Center are Dr. Socorro Zaragoza, Dr. Abbey Poffenberger, Omar Salinas-Chacon and Lilliana Gomez de Coss.

LATINO STUDENT INVITED TO WHITE HOUSE CEREMONY

His family fled the violence of El Salvador – his father and grandfather were once kidnapped for ransom – for the U.S. in 2001.

They could hardly pay their first winter heating bill – and that was in Nashville, Tennessee. Young Omar Salinas-Chacon attended a school where no one looked or talked like him, and his family faced such discrimination they wondered if they had a future in the land of their dreams.

What a difference a few years, a drive to succeed and a helping hand from the higher education community make. On Oct. 15, Salinas-Chacon, now a sophomore at ECU, found himself at the White House, the only Kentucky college student invited to attend a reception in celebration of Hispanic Heritage Month. The event also honored the 25th anniversary of the White House Initiative on Educational Excellence for Hispanics (WHIEEH).

The invitation came just a few months after Salinas-Chacon made a lasting impression on WHIEEH Director Alejandra Ceja at a roundtable discussion in Lexington that was part of the annual Latino Leadership and College Experience Camp (LLCEC), co-hosted by ECU and Bluegrass Community and Technical College. Ceja invited Salinas-Chacon to accompany Erin Howard, LLCEC director and director of Latino Outreach at BCTC, to the gala event.

"From six years ago, I went from being terrified of the White House and everything it represented to now being invited to the White House with open arms," Salinas-Chacon said. "That's what this means to me: a symbol of hope that the world is really changing and, despite what we may hear on the news, it is changing for the better."

As LLCEC director, Howard "didn't just show us academics, history, culture and financial aid. She showed us what is love, courage, compassion, forgiveness and pride, among other things."

Then there's an ECU trio of the "strongest and most compassionate women I have met, aside from my mother, of course": Dr. Abbey Poffenberger, chair of the Department of Languages, Cultures and Humanities; Dr. Socorro Zaragoza, Spanish professor and Latino Student Association faculty adviser; and Lilliana Gomez de Coss, the University's full-time Latino recruitment specialist.

"They don't just push you to your limit academically," Salinas-Chacon said. "They push you to be the best person you know you can be. They challenge you to learn about your culture and yourself. They challenge you to push the limit of what people think of you. At the same time, they were the ones to ground me back to earth by asking

questions like 'Have you eaten today? Do you have enough to eat? How was your weekend?'"

Salinas-Chacon, a 2014 graduate of Louisville Eastern High School, was first exposed to LLCEC and ECU in 2011, two years after his family moved to Kentucky.

"I know plenty of students who are in my situation," Salinas-Chacon said, "and they should be able to reach the same position I have, but they don't receive the same opportunities I did. In a way I was lucky, and I don't luck to be the only reason why someone receives an education. I want their hard work to make them reach that goal."

And maybe even reach the White House.

ONLINE PROGRAMS RANK BEST IN KENTUCKY

ECU ranks first among Kentucky colleges and universities offering online degrees, according to AffordableCollegesOnline.org (AC Online). Using a cost-to-quality metric to compare public and private not-for-profit institutions, reviewers placed Eastern first on their list of 12 schools in the Commonwealth.

Criteria for the 2016 Best Online Schools rankings included tuition, academic programs, counseling services and job placement for graduates. "These schools are going above and beyond to drive innovative learning in the much-desired online environment," said AC Online Founder and CEO Dan Schuessler.

"We are extremely proud to be recognized for providing a top-quality online learning experience," said ECU Executive Director of E-Campus Learning Tim Matthews. "It is especially meaningful to be recognized for affordability and academic quality since our team works hard to give students a respected, accredited education at a reasonable price."

